

# **Lessons Learned: Arizona All-Hazards Communications Unit Training Field Day**

***Presented to PSCC – July 16, 2013***

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# Background



- Since 2008, the federal Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) has developed a series of federally recommended training courses for All-Hazards Communications Unit positions, including the Communications Unit Leader (COML) and Technician (COMT).
- The training courses provide National Incident Management System (NIMS) compliant instruction to establish core competencies and train qualified emergency responders to serve in specific positions during all-hazards emergency operations.
- Emergency response professionals who have completed the training must successfully demonstrate competency on a series of tasks outlined in the associated All-Hazards Position Taskbook (PTB) and be signed off by the appropriate officials to become certified in the position.

## Background, *cont.*



- The PSIC Office, through a grant from DHS, developed the Communications Unit Training Field Day (“Field Day”) to provide a hands-on training opportunity for emergency responders to complete certain required PTB tasks (see [handout](#)).
  - The event supported Arizona’s Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP) strategic initiative #10, to “develop and implement a training plan to address interoperable communications”
  - It was coordinated with assistance from the Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee’s (SIEC’s) National Incident Management Communications Unit (NIMS-CU) Workgroup
  - Since 2009, there have been 14 COML and 3 COMT courses in AZ
- This event—the first of its kind in the State—was held in Phoenix on Wednesday, February 20, 2013.

# Event Development



- Following a competitive procurement process, the PSIC Office selected a contractor with extensive experience offering All-Hazards Communications Unit related training, Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), to help guide the development of the Field Day.
- The PSIC Office also collaborated with the Arizona Division of Emergency Management (ADEM) and the Arizona National Guard 91<sup>st</sup> Civil Support Team (CST) to reserve facilities at the Papago Park Military Reservation (PPMR) in order to provide ample space for activities and equipment.
- Although the Field Day was originally targeted for delivery in Spring or Fall 2012, the event was postponed several times due to procurement delays, as well as considerations for weather and the wildland fire season.

# Key Development Dates



- January 2012 – Field Day PTB survey conducted with trainees who completed the COML course in AZ; results from the survey were used to guide the event organization and structure
- February through September 2012 – Procurement completed according to State purchasing policies
- October 17, 2012 – Contract awarded to selected vendor: SAIC
- November 2012 – Event Planning Team (EPT) established
- December 6, 2012 – Initial Planning Conference held via web conference
- December 2012 through January 2013 – Field Day structure and schedule developed; facilities reserved; resources committed
- January 24, 2013 – Final Planning Conference held at PPMR

# Goal and Objectives



- The goal of Arizona's inaugural Field Day was to enhance the skills and abilities of All-Hazards Communications Unit personnel through hands-on training for individuals who completed the COML and/or COMT course in the State.
- The objectives of the Field Day were to:
  - Observe the ability of COML and COMT trainees to establish, maintain and demobilize multi- jurisdictional, agency and discipline operable and interoperable communication assets during a simulated incident response
  - Provide an opportunity for trainees to participate in specialized training and hands-on experience necessary to complete tasks within their PTB
  - Enhance participant NIMS skills and abilities





# Structure



- The structure of the Field Day was primarily determined by available personnel and equipment resources, with consideration for how much could be reasonably accomplished with a large group of trainees in a short amount of time.
  - It was important to create a setting where trainees could demonstrate and have a significant number of PTB tasks signed off, but tasks outside of the scope of the Field Day, such as personnel management, were not included
  - Trainees were separated into groups to rotate through training zones to complete up to 12 PTB task activities for COMLs and 10 for COMTs
- The Field Day also provided valuable networking opportunities for the trainees and staff, as these public safety communications professionals were able to interact and share ideas and resources in a learning environment.



## Structure, *cont.*



- Although trainees attended for a single day, the Field Day spanned three consecutive days for event staff:
  - **February 19, 2013** – Setup of Mobile Communications Units (MCUs) and equipment
  - **February 20, 2013** – Training Field Day, followed by break-down of MCUs and equipment
  - **February 21, 2013** – PTB Sign Off and final documentation session conducted at the AZ Department of Administration (ADOA) building
- During the PTB Sign Off session, staff convened to review notes, evaluate the trainee PTBs, and sign off where appropriate, as determined by group consensus.



# Venue



- The facilities at PPMR supported the planned activities and provided accommodations for staff, trainees and VIP Observers. Since there was sufficient space to spread out, the activities were divided among four “Tech Areas”:

- A: Joint Information Center (JIC)
- B: Log Cabin
- C: Softball Field (MCU Area)
- D: CST Conference Room



- Each Tech Area was supervised by a “Tech Area Manager” and contained several numbered “Tech Stations.”
- The ability of trainees to establish, maintain and demobilize operable and interoperable communications assets was observed by a certified COML or COMT at each Tech Station.

# Training Venue Map



The Field Day venue was located at the Papago Park Military Reservation (PPMR): 5636 East McDowell Road, Phoenix, AZ 85008



The letters on the map above represent the four Tech Areas:

**A =**  
Joint Information Center  
(JIC)

**B =**  
Log Cabin

**C =**  
Softball Field  
(MCU Area)

**D =**  
Civil Support Team (CST)  
Conference Room

# Schedule



Time	Activity
0730	Sign In
0800	Field Day Welcome & General Briefing
0820	Move to first Tech Area (10 min)
0830	Rotation #1 (90 min) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tech Area A: Red Team</li><li>• Tech Area B: White Team</li><li>• Tech Area C: Blue Team</li><li>• Tech Area D: Green Team</li></ul>
1000	Break / Move to next Tech Area (15 min)
1015	Rotation #2 (90 min) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tech Area A: Green Team</li><li>• Tech Area B: Red Team</li><li>• Tech Area C: White Team</li><li>• Tech Area D: Blue Team</li></ul>
1145	Lunch



## Schedule, *cont.*



Time	Activity
1245	Rotation #3 (90 min) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tech Area A: Blue Team</li><li>• Tech Area B: Green Team</li><li>• Tech Area C: Red Team</li><li>• Tech Area D: White Team</li></ul>
1415	Break / Move to next Tech Area (15 min)
1430	Rotation #4 (90 min) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tech Area A: White Team</li><li>• Tech Area B: Blue Team</li><li>• Tech Area C: Green Team</li><li>• Tech Area D: Red Team</li></ul>
1600	OPEN Rotation and Networking (30 min)
1630	Hotwash / Evaluations

# Equipment Resources



- Three Mobile Communications Units (MCUs)—vehicles equipped with communications gear and technology—were on hand and were utilized for some of the activities:
  - ADEM Bullfrog
  - 91st CST Unified Command Suite
  - Phoenix Fire UASI Communications Suburban
- Additional equipment was also loaned for use during the event:
  - Radio caches
  - Radio programming equipment
  - Gateways
  - Portable repeaters
  - Phone and computer training equipment



# Participants



- The Field Day was conducted under the direction of Michael Paulette (Field Day Director, SAIC contractor), with support from Matt Nilsen (Communications Specialist, SAIC contractor).
- Public safety communications subject matter experts from varying levels of government statewide participated in the event, either as Event Planning Team (EPT) members or trainees.
- PSIC Office members staffed the Field Day and provided support to the event staff, trainees, and VIP Observers.





# Event Planning Team



- The EPT was made up of a group of certified All-Hazards COMLs and a COMT—all of whom have been recognized at the Regional Level in Arizona—and a communications technician.
- The members were responsible for:
  - Participating in planning conferences and other planning meetings
  - Contributing to scenario development for training activities
  - Supporting development of activity-related documents by providing material content and feedback
  - Supporting logistics by committing communications resources, as available
  - Helping with Field Day set-up and demobilization
  - Staffing the Field Day
  - Reviewing and signing off on PTBs as appropriate

# Planning Team Members



- **Mark Botkin**  
Arizona Division of Emergency Management
- **Jesse Cooper**  
Phoenix Police Department
- **Jennifer Hagen**  
Phoenix Police Department
- **Karl Hartmetz**  
La Paz County Sheriff's Office
- **Morgan Hoaglin**  
Arizona Division of Emergency Management
- **Bob Hollister**  
Cochise County Emergency Services
- **Alan Jensen**  
Tempe Fire Department
- **Jerry Justus**  
Arizona Division of Emergency Management
- **Jeremy Knoll**  
Arizona Department of Public Safety
- **Richard Langevin**  
Maricopa County Emergency Management
- **Jason Roosevelt**  
Phoenix Fire Department
- **Gary Rose**  
161st Air Refueling Wing Air National Guard
- **Bradley Schmitz**  
91st CST (WMD) AZ National Guard
- **Jeff Schripsema**  
Phoenix Fire Department
- **Robert Sisley**  
Yavapai County Sheriff's Office
- **Michael Todd**  
Buckskin Fire Department
- **Dan Wills**  
Arizona State Forestry Division
- **Everett Wittig, Jr.**  
Bisbee Police Department
- **Michael Worrell**  
Phoenix Fire Department

# Trainees



- The PSIC Office notified trainees about the Field Day in late December 2012 and early January 2013. Interested individuals were required to complete and submit a registration form for the event.
- Trainees invited to participate in the Field Day were asked to arrive at the venue prepared, as if being deployed to an incident, with a valid, initiated PTB and their response kit. (They were also encouraged to bring radios and programming equipment, although it was not necessary, as equipment was provided at the Field Day.)
- Trainees were separated into four teams: Red, White, Blue and Green:
  - Each Team had a designated “Team Leader” that was responsible for ensuring team members stayed on task and moved in a timely fashion to and from the Tech Areas for each scheduled rotation
  - Teams had 6 to 8 members, made up of roughly half COMLs and half COMTs

# Trainees, *cont.*



- A total of 27 trainees participated in the Field Day, representing 19 agencies from 5 counties:

- La Paz County:
  - » Buckskin Fire Department
- Pima County:
  - » Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES)
  - » Pima County Office of Emergency Management
- Yavapai County:
  - » Yavapai County Emergency Management
- Yuma County:
  - » US Army Yuma Proving Ground
  - » Yuma County Office of Emergency Management
  - » Yuma Auxiliary Communications



# Trainees, *cont.*



- Trainee agencies, continued:

- Maricopa County:

- » 91st Civil Support Team, AZ National Guard
    - » Arizona Department of Corrections
    - » Arizona State Forestry Division
    - » Arizona Wing Civil Air Patrol
    - » City of Glendale Fire Department
    - » City of Peoria
    - » Department of Public Safety
    - » Glendale Fire Department
    - » Mesa Police Department
    - » Phoenix Fire Department
    - » Queen Creek Fire Department
    - » Red Cross
    - » US Department of Health & Human Services



# VIP Observers



- The long term success of the Field Day and Arizona's Communications Unit Training and Recognition program is dependent on having the support of policy makers, Incident Commanders, and operational staff.
- Lisa Dee Meyerson, Arizona Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC), invited VIP Observers to the event to be briefed by the Field Day Director and Field Day Coordinator and then escorted through all four Tech Areas.
- VIPs toured the various training activities taking place and interacted with participants and staff.
- After the tour, VIPs participated in a discussion that emphasized the need for continued support in order to maintain a sustainable model for this highly technical Communications Unit training event.



# VIP Observers, cont.



- Steve Campbell, Police Chief, El Mirage Police Department
- Lisa Hansen, Assistant Director Planning and Preparedness, Arizona Department of Homeland Security
- Phil Manfredi, Chief Strategy Officer and Deputy State CIO, Arizona Department of Administration
- George Molnar, Nevada SWIC, Nevada Department of Public Safety
- Brigadier General Jose Salinas, Director of the Joint Staff, Arizona National Guard
- Paul Wilson, Captain, Pima County Sheriff's Department





# Accomplishments



- Overall, based on the staff and trainee responses to the feedback forms that were collected at the end of the event and the comments that were provided during the Field Day Hot Wash, participants felt that it was an overwhelmingly positive experience.
- The event was successful in large part because of the contributions made by the EPT members.
  - These subject matter experts provided their time and input to structure the event in a way that would best benefit a large number of trainees from across the state
  - They secured equipment and donated consumables either personally or through agency coordination
  - Having a high ratio of certified staff to trainees (approximately 1 to 1.5) allowed for a considerable amount of one-on-one interaction

## Accomplishments, *cont.*



- The Field Day was well-documented, and the materials that were distributed, such as the Incident Action Plan (IAP) and Trainee Handbook, were beneficial for all involved during the event itself.
- The registration process attracted the right individuals; trainees who were actively following through on completing their PTBs to become certified at the agency level.
- The Tech Station activities were a good follow-on to the All-Hazards COML and COMT training courses, and they provided an opportunity for hands-on technical equipment experience, which some trainees may not normally have.
- The contact list with Field Day staff and trainee information was sent to participants at the end of the event. This was seen to be of extreme value, as individuals indicated they will use this list to reach out to each other and develop future mentoring opportunities.

# Lessons Learned



- In addition to the many accomplishments of the Field Day, there were several elements that may be organized differently or could be improved for future training events of this nature.
  - Although the Field Day combined both COML and COMT trainees, it would be possible to organize an event for only one position or to develop two separate activity tracks
  - Scenario based activities—preparing a task-related assignment for trainees to complete for review by an evaluator at a later time—may be considered for future events
- A detailed equipment list should be noted in the appropriate section of the Tech Station Form for each station. This will aid in the set-up, demobilization, and return of equipment.
- Multiple radio programming stations should be established in order to accommodate a large number of trainees.

## Lessons Learned, *cont.*



- For future applications, it is important to be aware that staff levels, equipment availability, and venue size will determine the scope and structure of this type of training event.
- Arizona's Field Day would not have been possible without the time, effort, and dedication of the EPT members and the participation of skilled and attentive COML and COMT trainees.
- The State's emergency response community is committed to effective collaboration and advancing communications interoperability; events like the Field Day support this enterprise.



# Appreciation for a Job Well Done



- The State's inaugural Field Day was a major undertaking, which required significant time and effort from numerous subject matter experts from across the state.
- The PSIC Office would like to recognize and thank all of the individuals that contributed to the success of this event:
  - SAIC Contractors
  - Event Planning Team Members
  - Trainees
  - VIP Observers
  - AZ Division of Emergency Management
  - 91<sup>st</sup> Civil Support Team
- We are very grateful to the agencies, policy makers, supervisors and operational staff who supported the involvement of our trainees and event planning team.

# Next Steps



- The goals and objectives of the Field Day were accomplished, and the outcome was a training opportunity that is both modular (activities may be added or removed, as required by the scope and staff levels of the event) and sustainable (it is well documented and replicable).
- The PSIC Office intends to offer similar events in the future, as funding permits, as a training tool for All-Hazards Communications Unit trainees statewide and to increase mentoring opportunities for trainees.
- The documents that were developed for the Field Day are archived with the PSIC Office, and we are pleased to share them in support of future applications of this model, both within and outside of the State. Requests should be sent to: [psic@azpsic.gov](mailto:psic@azpsic.gov).



**Further Discussion; Questions?**  
**Thank You!**

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